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MEDIA RELEASE   **Thomas P. Colantuono**
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NEWTON MAN SENTENCED ON FEDERAL
MONEY LAUNDERING CHARGES

CONCORD, NEW HAMPSHIRE: United States Attorney Tom Colantuono and U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration Special Agent in Charge Mark Trouville announced that Christopher DeVITO, DOB 11/15/68, of Newton, New Hampshire, was sentenced on January 21, 2003 of laundering the proceeds of marijuana trafficking.

On September 26, 2002, DeVito entered a guilty plea to an Information charging that during September and October, 2000, he laundered the proceeds of the distribution of between 20 and 40 kilograms of marijuana though his father's bank accounts. Since that time, DeVito has been held at the New Hampshire State Prison, where he is serving a sentence on unrelated animal cruelty charges.

U.S. District Judge Steven J. McAuliffe imposed a sentence of 36 months imprisonment followed by a 3-year period of supervised release during which his behavior will be monitored by the U.S. Department of Probation. Judge McAuliffe ordered that DeVito serve the sentence consecutively with the 2-5 year state prison sentence he is currently serving on an animal cruelty conviction from Rockingham County.

In a related civil forfeiture case, DeVito has agreed to forfeit to the United States the following properties: (1) $291,900.13 in United States Currency (which was seized by Newton Police Officers on January 15, 2002, during the execution of a search warrant); (2) one-half of the proceeds of the sale of DeVito's residence at 37 Williamine Drive, Newton, NH (which is appraised at $372,000); (3) the proceeds of a sale of a condominium located in Clearwater, FL (with an approximate equity of $185,000); (4) a 2000 Volvo V40 station wagon; (5) a 2000 Ford Excursion van; (6) two Yamaha 4-wheel vehicles; (7) Kubota tractor, front loader, bucket and accessories; and (8) a trailer. The total value of property forfeited by DeVito is approximately

$710,000. Property to be returned to DeVito, per the settlement, includes one-half the proceeds of the sale of 37 Williamine Drive, Newton, NH; a 1999 Dodge Pickup truck; and a 2001 Volvo V70 station wagon. The assets will be sold by the United States Marshal's Service (USMS), and approximately 80% of the proceeds of the sales will be shared by the U.S. Department of Justice with the participating law enforcement agencies who investigated the case.

U.S. Attorney Colantuono stated: "This case exemplifies this Office's commitment to the New England Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Force, and the aggressive prosecution of financial crimes related to drug trafficking, as well as the seizure and forfeiture of the proceeds of criminal activity. The federal money laundering statutes are one of several components of the war on drugs being waged by federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies, and along with asset forfeitures, they are effective tools for hitting drug traffickers where it hurts most: in their wallets and bank accounts."

The case against DeVito was investigated by Special Agent Todd Prough of the Drug Enforcement Administration's Cross Border Initiative (CBI) based in Lowell, Massachusetts. The CBI is a federally initiated and funded task force comprised of federal agents from the DEA, the FBI, the IRS, and state and local police officers from southern New Hampshire and northeastern Massachusetts. The CBI, which is part of the Department of Justice's Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Force (OCDETF) in New England, targets drug trafficking activity along the New Hampshire-Massachusetts border. The DeVito civil forfeiture case is being handled by Assistant United States Attorney Jean Weld. The criminal case was prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney Joseph N. Laplante, who is assigned to OCDETF.